



STATE OF MARYLAND

## DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Be Prepared: Get Your Seasonal Flu Shot Now** ***Everyone over 6 months of age is encouraged to get vaccinated***

BALTIMORE, MD (September 23, 2011) – The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) joined with Baltimore County Health Department and local officials at a Seasonal Flu Vaccination Clinic ‘Tip-Off’ today to remind Marylanders that now is the time to get an annual influenza vaccination.

“Everyone over 6 months of age needs to get immunized against flu – this year and every year,” said Frances Phillips, DHMH Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. “The flu vaccine is safe, effective and in good supply across the State. Getting the flu is no fun and spreading it to young babies and people with health conditions can cause serious problems.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months of age and older get the flu vaccine - even if they were vaccinated last year - since immunity from vaccination declines over time. Vaccine is safe, effective and readily available this season. Approximately 170 million doses of vaccine are being produced with about 90 million doses already available.

There are also plenty of flu vaccinators this year. In addition to doctors’ offices, local health departments and many pharmacies will also be offering vaccine. In addition, local health departments are working with some schools in their counties to offer flu vaccine at school. Residents should check with their local health department for more information about school programs.

The current seasonal flu vaccine is a match for the strains of the virus expected to affect the United States this season. Maryland has no reported flu cases for the 2011-12 season, but influenza is expected to increase in the next few months.

#### **Help us track influenza in Maryland:**

We want Maryland residents to help us track flu. Maryland has implemented an Internet-based *Maryland Resident Influenza Tracking Survey*. This tool is designed to enhance the State’s existing influenza surveillance by monitoring influenza-like illnesses among residents who may not seek medical care. Residents may sign up via the Internet to participate in weekly on-line surveys in which they can report any flu-like symptoms for the previous week. To help, Maryland residents may visit:  
<http://dhmh.maryland.gov/flusurvey>

#### **Learn More**

For more information about seasonal flu, health department clinics in your area, visit [www.dhmh.maryland.gov](http://www.dhmh.maryland.gov) and click on “Seasonal Flu” under “Hot Topics.” To learn more about seasonal flu vaccine, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/flu vaccine.htm>

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